



# Understanding Conflict

## The Agile Bear Coaching Series

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- » Do you have conflict?
- » The Five Levels of Conflict
- » How to Identify the levels of Conflict
- » Q&A



# Five Levels of Conflict



## Level 1 – Problem to Solve

- Information Sharing and Collaboration
- Language is open and fact based



## Level 2 - Disagreement

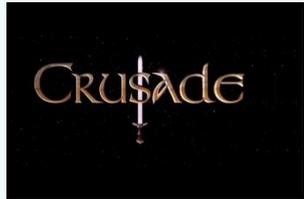
- Personal Protection trumps collaboration
- Language is guarded and is open to interpretation



## Level 3 - Contest

- Winning trumps resolving
- Language includes personal attacks

# Five Levels of Conflict



## Level 4 – Fight or flight

- Shifts from winning to getting rid of person(s).
- Factions are solidified.
- Talk now takes on the language of “principles,” not “issues.”



## Level 5 - Intractable Situation

- Personalities have become the focus
- Conflict is now unmanageable.
- Energy is centered on the elimination and/or destruction of the person(s).

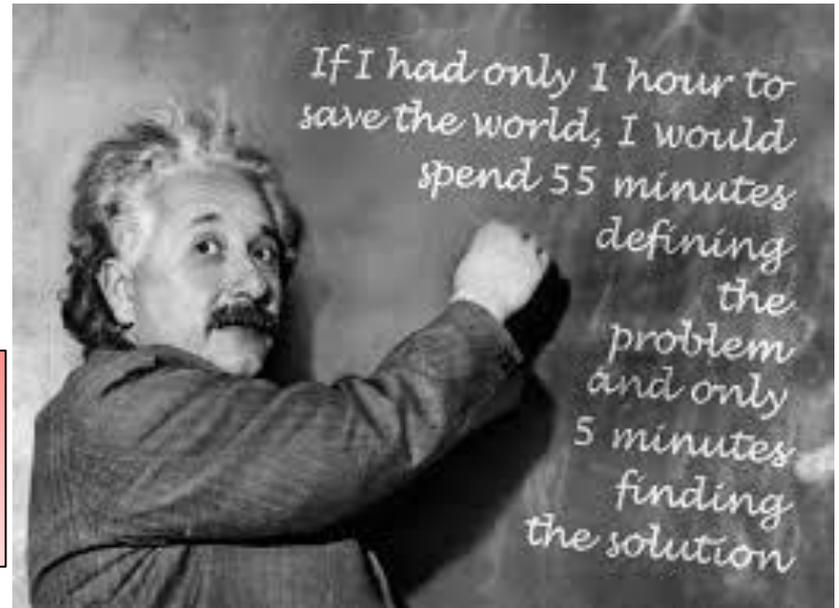
Adapted from Speed Leas 5 levels of conflict & Lyssa Adkins Coaching Agile Teams

# Level 1: Problem to Solve

We all know what conflict at level 1 feels like.

- ❖ Everyday frustrations and aggravations.
- ❖ People having and voicing different opinions.
- ❖ Misunderstanding communications.
- ❖ Conflicting goals, values, needs may exist.
- ❖ Problem oriented rather than person oriented.
- ❖ Team members likely feel anxious about the conflict in the air.

**This is considered positive conflict, we need this!**



## Level 2: Disagreement

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- ❖ The disagreement is often about how to solve the problem and is a normal, expected part of solving problems.
- ❖ The key is to find ways to resolve disagreement or to convince all parties to come to a shared point of view.
- ❖ Mixing of personalities and issues.
- ❖ Problem cannot be clearly defined.
- ❖ Beginning of distrust and personalizing problem.



## Level 3: Contest

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- ❖ Begins to be a contest for who will win.
- ❖ A contest is one in which there are winners and losers and no one wants to be a loser.
- ❖ Sides begin to form and clarity about the problem to be solved begins to diminish.
- ❖ It quickly becomes more important to win than to solve the problem.
- ❖ The dynamics of “win/lose” becomes dominant.
- ❖ Personal attacks.
- ❖ Formation of factions, sides, camps. Distortion a major problem.

Immature people always want to win an argument, even at the cost of a relationship.

Mature people understand that it's always better to lose an argument and win a relationship.

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# Level 4: Fight or Flight

- ❖ Can also be considered a Crusade
- ❖ Individuals & Teams begin to be more aggressive, acting instinctively with the situation quickly deteriorating.
- ❖ Those who prefer conflict avoidance leave and those who remain become more focused on winning.
- ❖ Principles and dogma are often evoked as justification for various points of view.
- ❖ This level is characterized by strategizing how to win the fight and garnering the resources necessary to win.
- ❖ Conversation become dogmatic about “principles,” not “issues.”



## Level 5: Intractable Situation

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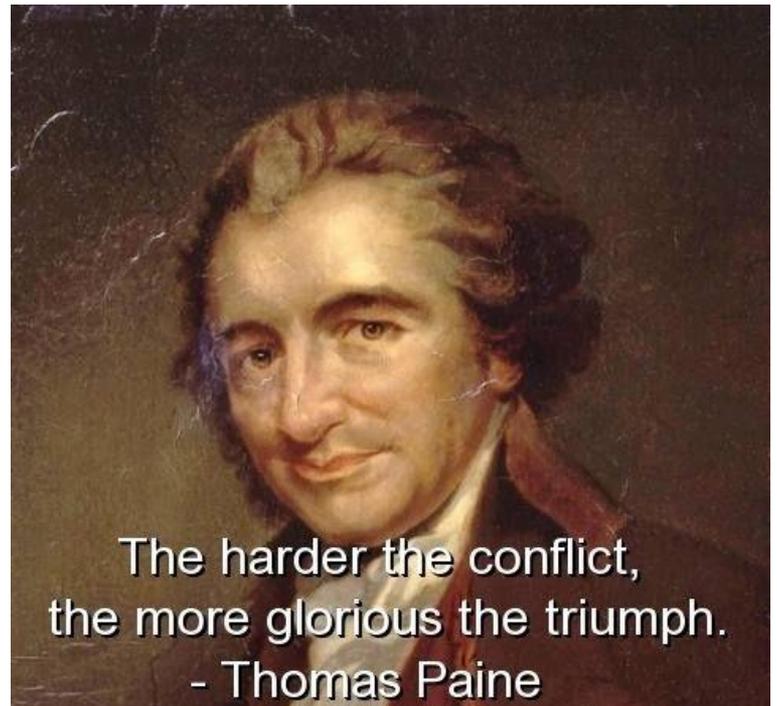
- ❖ Can also be described as “World War”.
- ❖ Any goal for reconciliation is generally lost.
- ❖ Emotional responses overwhelm thinking and problem solving approaches.
- ❖ Combatants are focused not just on winning, but even on punishing or destroying opponents.
- ❖ No longer focused on the issues of the conflict.
- ❖ Complete focus on personalities.
- ❖ Conflict is now unmanageable.
- ❖ Energy is centered on the elimination and/or destruction of “*THEM*”.

**Nobody wins wars. Generals plan battles to be swift and decisive. When they are not, the aim is to end the conflict less defeated than your opponent.**  
~ Stephen Bennon

# Level 0: Depression

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- ❖ Depression is defined as “anger turned inward.”
- ❖ Sometimes agile teams do not know they are in conflict because they are in a state of depression.
- ❖ The task is to raise their awareness that there are problems to be solved





## Q&A

**“Action has meaning only in relationship, and without understanding relationship, action on any level will only breed conflict.”**

**~ Jiddu Krishnamurti**

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Carl “The Agile Bear” Shea

Thank you!

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